scientific and technological activity are not lost sight of. Participation of private sector is also being pursued to pool resources and funds specially for technology development.

Extinction of bananas

3856. SHRI RUMANDLA RAAMACHANDRAYYA :
SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO :
SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY :

Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that bananas may face extinction within ten years on account of pests and diseases; and

(b) if so, the genetic engineering efforts proposed to save bananas from going extinct?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT) : (a) and (b) As per the report in an international journal, New Scientist (January, 2003), a leading researcher has stated that banana could be wiped out by two diseases, namely, Panama disease and Black Sigatoka, that have struck Africa, South America and Asia. However the reports by American Phytopathological Society (APS) and UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) state that banana is not on the verge of extinction since it is unlikely that these diseases will prove fatal. These diseases can be controlled through use of fungicides and pesticides. In addition, use of germplasm of greater genetic diversity for plantation and developing genetically engineered disease resistant plants will also help in tackling this problem.Studies on genetic engineering and genomics are underway in many research laboratories in India and abroad.

So far, there is no risk of extinction of Banana in India because bananas are cultivated under polyclonal system, whereas it is grown as monoclonal system in Latin America and Caribbean countries. India harbours a wide range of banana varieties; some of which constitute a valuable gene pool to be used to develop resistance to major pests and diseases for use in developing improved varieities.

Revival of VSP

3857. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the differences between Government and the Andhra Pradesh Government over the revival of Vizag Steel Plant have been resolved; and

(b) if so, what is the present status of revival of the above steel plant?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI BRAJ KISHORE TRIPATHY) : (a) and (b) The process of resolving the differences on the revival-cum-disinvestment plan of RINL, between Govt. of Andhra Pradesh and the concerned Departments/Ministries of the Central Government is continuing. However, the Company has been consistently improving its physical and financial performance during the last five years as may be seen from the details given below :

Physical Performance ('000 tonnes)

Item	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	2002-03**
Hot Metal	2510	2943	3165	3485	3942
Liquid Steel	2225	2656	2909	3083	3357
Saleable Steel	1933	2382	2507	2757	3056

Financial Performance (Rs. in crores)

Item	98-99	99-00	00-01	01-02	2002-03**
Turnover	2762	2973	3436	4081	5059
Gross Margin	15	249	504	690	1045
Cash Profit	-346	-130	153	400	910
Net Profit	-457	-562	-291	-75	450

** Figures are provisional and unaudited.

Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Limited has thus achieved a turn around by making a net profit of approximately Rs. 450 crores, during 2002-03, for the first time, since its inception.

The Company is making all out effort to stabilize and further improve its overall performance.

Steel Policy

3858. SHRIMATI N. P. DURGA : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that Government are thinking of preparing a comprehensive steel policy for the Indian Steel Industry in the light of the on-going revised restructuring and globalisation;